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International Year of Older Persons, 1999: activities and legacies

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In resolutions 52/80 and 53/109, the General Assembly requested States to participate, at an appropriate global policy-making level, in the four plenary meetings which it had decided should be devoted at its fifty-fourth session to the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons. In resolution 53/109 the Assembly also invited broad participation in the Year and requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution to its fifty-fourth session. The present report is prepared in response to that request. Section II summarizes selected activities in observance of the Year. Section III analyses the impact of the Year on the orientation and substantive content of the United Nations programme on ageing. And the annex summarizes highlights from an expert consultation in devising a policy framework for "a society for all ages", introducing for further exploration and debate a new "architecture of ageing", one that is holistic, preventative, sustainable, and possibly even "wealth-creating".

2. The four plenary meetings being devoted to the Year and its follow-up are scheduled for 4 and 5 October, shortly after the International Day of Older Persons (1 October). The Consultative Group for the International Year of Older Persons assisted the Commission for Social Development in guiding preparations for the Year and also served as an informal forum for discussing national and international proposals and initiatives. The United Nations programme on ageing served as the secretariat for the International Year. The programme on ageing, which is located in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, spearheaded a year-long debate on ageing in a changing world.

II. Activities of 1999: selected examples

3. The International Year of Older Persons organized conferences, seminars, research studies, and initiatives that explored and promoted the theme "A society for all ages". Promotional events were also abundant, including cultural, educational, art and social activities, as well as the launching of commemorative stamps, posters, and calendars with the Year's logo. In particular, the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat implemented a multimedia information campaign to publicize the Year, working closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the non-governmental Committee on Ageing of the Conference of Non-governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO). The campaign spearheaded the launch of the Year at United Nations Headquarters on 1 October 1998 and coordinated a special event on 30 September 1999. The special event occurred against the background of exhibits in the General Assembly Visitor's Lobby, including one by older artists, coordinated by the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts. Altogether, the activities have brought to the Year a global relevance that will sustain and move "A society for all ages" beyond 1999 and into the twenty-first century.

4. This section of the report condenses worldwide activities for the Year into the four facets of the conceptual framework for "A society for all ages": the situation of older persons; lifelong individual development; multigenerational relationships; and population ageing and development. In addition, initiatives with regard to women and ageing are highlighted. Activities at the national level, by the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, and international non-governmental organizations, are noted. Given the vast number of activities of over 80 national committees and numerous other entities, not all could be included, owing to limitations of space. In the coming months, as resources are made available, an analysis of the activities will be made, including those listed on the World Wide Web (the Year's Web site is located at: www.un.org/esa/socdev/IYOP).

A. Situation of older persons

5. Activities of, by, and for older persons were very abundant during the Year, bearing out an expectation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing,[1] that "The slowly expanding lifespan of the population even in developing areas constitutes a hidden resource for national economies which, if properly stimulated and utilized, might help to ... ensure the status of [older persons] as active participants in national life and production, rather than as passive and vulnerable victims of development."[1]

6. The situation of older persons is addressed comprehensively in the 62 recommendations of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 37/51, and in the 18 United Nations Principles for Older Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 46/91. The range of issues highlighted in these two historic documents are reflected in the activities below, including economic livelihood, human rights, participation, integration, and developmental potential of older persons, and the planning and implementation of multisectored social services.

1. National activities

7. Governments reached out to many organizations, including voluntary and private enterprises, to help plan and manage initiatives. Ethiopia established a focal point committee with a cross-section of members that included the national lottery and the postal service to ensure a variety of initiatives. China conducted a nationwide publicity drive on respecting older persons and held regional workshops on family support and community service and a large performance on the life of older people, with proceeds allocated to older persons in poverty. The Ukraine involved academia in addressing social and legal protection of older persons. Spain developed a comprehensive programme of activities that involved the participation of non-governmental organizations, private associations and older persons' organizations. Australia created a consultation process with local communities and organizations to gain knowledge of ageing issues and make recommendations for action. The Government also doubled its financial commitment to the Year by allocating funds towards combating negative stereotypes of older Australians. As a way to connect governmental and private entities, Japan created a network of over 30 organizations to further the Year's objectives. In the Russian Federation, the Party of Pensioners is exploring the precarious situation of older persons in transitional economies in a conference to be held in December 1999. Canada has encouraged all sectors of society, including corporations, to be responsible to a diverse and ageing population and to create initiatives that would target the improvement of services for older persons. Radio and television programmes in Denmark focused on dignity and the life of older persons during the Year.

8. Measures to promote economic and sustainable livelihood are included in several initiatives. Access to credit and training in the Philippines is permitting individuals, regardless of age, to start or maintain their own businesses. Ecuador is addressing the situation of income security through possible tax exemptions. Nigeria created a network with banks and insurance companies to broker the payment of pensioners' monthly stipends. Kazakhstan focused on practical outcomes by providing a one-time additional pension payment in 1999 to those who had reached the age of 70 and free dentures to those whose age exceeded 70 years. South Africa is promoting the involvement of organized trade and industry through special discounts on products for older persons. The "Jobs for elderly" initiative in Jamaica has been one way of addressing employment issues for older persons at a time when globalization is affecting the country's ability to adequately fund social services. Brazil is supporting projects of poverty eradication that hopes to benefit thousands of older persons.

9. The issue of human rights for older persons is drawing the attention of the international community. Inspired by the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, the Dominican Republic drafted and approved the Code of Rights of Older Persons as a contribution to the Year — a concerted effort to provide protection and defend the rights of older persons. Italy is proposing that the Principles be considered in the context of international humanitarian law and in proposals to implement the Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Czech Republic is hosting a conference, The Importance of Human Rights for the Older Generation, in October 1999, which is being convened by the European Federation of the Elderly (EURAG) and the Czech Republic. New Zealand removed the upper age limit in its Human Rights Act of 1993, which prohibits discrimination in the workplace. South Africa included the rights of older persons in its Declaration on Human Rights and other relevant legislation, and Colombia and the Gambia have addressed this issue with the aim to increase the participation of older persons in economic and political decisions.

10. Participation and integration of older persons in all levels of society is increasingly evident. Armenia implemented "Elder generation", a project to improve the integration of older persons in the economic and cultural life of the country, including the social welfare system. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ladies Charitable Society is convening the country's first international conference on ageing. It will explore ageing in the twenty-first century. Argentina developed a research scholarship programme as an incentive for institutions to investigate the income security and social welfare of older persons and, in addition, drafted the National Law for Older Persons which will highlight the social role of older persons in society. Mongolia is implementing a system of measures to make appropriate use of the skills and wisdom of retirees. Hong Kong Province of China hosted an Asia/Pacific regional conference in April with the theme "Towards a society for all ages: integration, participation and care". Finland worked to promote the national theme "Adding life to years" as it encouraged the implementation of the Finnish Action Programme on Ageing, and Municipalities for People of All Ages. Sweden initiated "SeniorSurf Sweden", an Internet educational collaboration in which libraries throughout the country educate older persons on the use of the Internet. Belgium is working with various organizations to create a means of communicating and demonstrating the constructive roles older people play in society, including their role within the family, organizations, politics and welfare. Austria

established several task forces to study the situation of older persons in areas that include a new culture of ageing and the social and political participation of older persons.

11. The developmental potential and diversity of late life is appreciated in Bangladesh, where older persons are involved in arbitration processes in the village communities, and in Thailand, where the experience of older persons is utilized in the area of environmental conservation and anti-drug campaigns. Nepal is encouraging the establishment of cooperative farms by joint efforts involving older persons and the operation of clinics by retired doctors which would provide services at subsidized rates to older persons. Italy has addressed measures to build a society for new generations of older people who reject a vision of old age as a state of dependence. In this regard, legislation is being proposed for organizing a civil and volunteer service of senior citizens. Luxembourg, too, is promoting volunteerism on behalf of a growing proportion of older persons, as is Norway in its exploration of senior citizen's councils and volunteers as agents for active ageing. The United States of America hosted numerous events that examined active ageing in diverse contexts, including the Fifth World Congress on Physical Activity, Aging and Sports, in August 1999. In addition, events occurring in New York City on 1 and 2 October 1999 highlighted an area that older persons traditionally do not lay claim to: clothing and design. The Changing Shape of Fashion educational symposium and the Generations of Style fashion show, sponsored by a group of diverse private-sector associations, added a new dimension to active ageing.

12. Numerous countries are giving formal recognition to older persons for their contributions to society, including Trinidad and Tobago, Zambia, China, El Salvador, Nigeria and Kuwait. Mozambique focused on the contributions of older persons in its national seminar "Older People: A Positive Contribution to Development". Pakistan acknowledged the meritorious services of its older population by granting them indexed pensions and grants; and Paraguay awarded national prizes to the best older persons' organization and nursing home, and to the non-governmental organizations, artists, and students who were best able to illustrate "A society for all ages".

13. Mindful of the cultural and artistic needs of older persons, Lithuania developed cultural programmes and a social service infrastructure to address such needs. Switzerland will continue its interest in issues of personal growth and autonomy of older persons in a conference to be held in November 1999. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Dark Horse Venture promotes positive aspects of ageing by inspiring older persons to discover their hidden talents and achieve personal fulfilment. Activities such as dancing, theatre, music, and sports competitions were on the agenda in numerous countries, including Indonesia, Cameroon, Estonia, Hungary, and Germany, which will convene the International Meeting of Seniors' Play-acting/Theatre Groups (October 1999, Cologne).

14. The provision of appropriate health and social services is a universal challenge. Romania focused on legislative initiatives, and Chile established a public service law, designed to improve the implementation and coordination of services for older persons. Cyprus is working to upgrade standards of governmental homes for older persons to improve their quality of life. Zimbabwe and Uganda sought to highlight the predicament of older persons in the care they provide for family members and orphans with AIDS. Malaysia's Vision 2020 is a national initiative that aims to achieve a caring society under the banner "Caring families for the happiness of older persons", in partnership with the private sector. Sri Lanka is trying to foster a rebirth of traditional care — not as a way of looking back but rather as a forward-looking new course. France will host (Dijon, September 1999) "Aging Well in One's Own Town", a seminar organized by the Fondation de France to promote initiatives from a variety of countries on care innovation for older persons in urban areas. Germany initiated a joint pilot project in eight European countries to establish information and counselling centres and provide customized assistance and advice on medical and social services, and Israel brought together experts in the field of ageing to address resource allocation in improving health care, restoring dignity and enhancing the lifestyle of older persons.

2. United Nations system and other intergovernmental bodies

15. How to ensure fuller participation and better quality of care in old age is on the agenda of several United Nations bodies and agencies. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) is facilitating field research on the living conditions of older people in urban communities. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) will convene a conference in December 1999 in Switzerland, together with the Institut Universitaire Kurt Bosch and the United States National Institute on Aging (NIA), entitled Status of the Older Population: Prelude to the Twenty-first Century. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) analysed issues relating to older refugees, including social disintegration; the erosion of social support systems through economic decline; and the dispersal of families. UNHCR seeks to intensify

organizational efforts to better assist older refugees within regular assistance programmes. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has produced a set of recommendations to improve the quality of life of older persons. They were incorporated into the background document for the February 1999 forum of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme and Action in the Hague. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recently published its annual *Human Development Report, 1999: Globalization with a Human Face*, which took a comprehensive look at care and the global economy.

16. The United Nations Information Centres were very active during the Year. The Information Centre in Mexico City conducted radio interviews and reached out to school teachers; Madrid's Centre participated in lectures and interviews covered by the national press; the Centre in Tehran translated and broadcast background material on the radio; Minsk's Information Centre initiated the publication of calendars by a Belarussian photographer who illustrated the United Nations Principles for Older Persons in English and Russian; and the Centre in Brussels teamed up with numerous regional entities to coordinate and promote its far-reaching information campaign for the Year.

17. The International Social Security Association (ISSA), together with the International Labour Organization (ILO), has addressed rising social security needs at a time of declining governmental supports. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) plans to conduct studies on income security for older persons, including social security and public pension schemes. The European Commission (EC) is acting to implement the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which entered into force on 1 May 1999 and which contains a legal basis to promote non-discrimination on the grounds of age throughout the European Union.

3. International non-governmental organizations

18. Numerous measures focused on the situation of older persons. The CONGO Committee on Ageing convened a video conference on the situation of older persons in February 1999. Additionally, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the CONGO Committee on Ageing organized the Age-quake Debates, which are taking place during 1999 and into the year 2000.

19. HelpAge International launched "Ageing and Development Report", which provides information about the situation of older persons in developing countries and in the transition states of Eastern and Central Europe. HelpAge also compiled, through its Asia Regional Development Centre and in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a report on the situation of older persons in the Mekong Basin region, entitled "Mekong Basin initiative on ageing". The International Association of Gerontology (IAG) organized several regional conferences during the Year which took a comprehensive look at ageing issues in Cuba, Germany and the United States. In the Republic of Korea, it convened the Sixth Asia/Oceania Regional Congress of Gerontology (Seoul, June 1999) on changing family systems and care for the aged in the twenty-first century. The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is hosting its Fourth Global Conference on Ageing (September 1999, Montreal, Canada), which will address the basic needs and rights of older persons in the context of globalization and technological change.

20. The AARP International Activities Office produced a paper entitled "Strategies for a society for all ages", to help stimulate worldwide exploration of the theme, "A society for all ages". AARP also presented to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-seventh session a booklet, "Human rights are ageless", containing specially made postcards with handwritten messages from older people around the world about the meaning of human rights. The International Project on Rural Ageing/West Virginia University Center on Aging has guided research into the situation of older persons in rural settings worldwide, with plans to work towards a major international conference on rural ageing in the year 2000. The CONGO Committee on Aging is preparing an agenda for ageing which is to be included in the Millennium Forum that will be held at United Nations Headquarters in May 2000. The International Longevity Center (ILC) sponsored a symposium at United Nations Headquarters in April 1999 entitled "Adding life to the years that have been added to life". The event shared information on issues related to healthy ageing and highlighted the importance of living life to the fullest.

21. The Year's activities have been steadily broadcast by a number of media and information organizations, including Coalition 99, which increased its newsletter distribution in developed and developing countries to well over 3,000 copies, and Eurolink Age which has been chronicling the Year's activities on ageing in the interest of the millions of older persons across the European Union. The European Institute for the Media (EIM) and the Netherlands Platform Older People and Europe (NPOE) organized MediaAge.net, an Internet service designed to inform people about policy-related issues on ageing, and Changing Media in an Ageing

Society, directed to strengthen the relationships between non-governmental organizations and media services.

B. Lifelong individual development

22. Individuals go through life experiencing a range of influences and interactions that may positively or negatively affect their capabilities in later years. Policies and programmes promoting lifelong learning, healthy lifestyles, workplace flexibility etc. can influence choices early in life, with cumulative effects. The International Plan of Action on Ageing, notes that "Preparation of the entire population for the later stages of life should be an integral part of social policies and encompass physical, psychological, cultural, religious, spiritual, economic, health and other factors".[2]

1. National activities

23. Japan is promoting lifelong health improvement, learning and skills development, and lifelong stable and comfortable living environments in accordance with its Basic Law on Measures for the Ageing of Society. Chile has formed an interuniversity commission to incorporate the theme of ageing into early academic study.

24. Australia will examine vitality, meaning, and fulfilment throughout life in a conference "Growing Into Wisdom" in October 1999. India and Albania launched media campaigns to advocate the need to undertake lifelong preparation for old age, and Slovakia included writers, representatives of religious organizations and the financial sector in its examination of lifelong development issues. Liechtenstein encouraged midlife programmes that prepare persons for retirement under the watchword "Ageing with success". Slovenia convened a round table on lifelong individual development and the consequences of unhealthy lifestyles, and Panama organized a literary contest in secondary schools on the relationship between lifestyle and health in later life.

2. United Nations system and international non-governmental organizations

25. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will co-sponsor the Life-long Learning Colloquium with AARP (September 1999, New York). The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Global Movement for Active Ageing, a worldwide promotional walk that will embrace the globe for 24 hours on 2 October 1999, with events beginning in Tonga and New Zealand and proceeding around the globe. (This is also known as the Global Embrace.) The Geneva International Network on Ageing (GINA) has worked in close collaboration with WHO in implementing the Global Embrace. The Loretto Religious Community in the United States convened a conference that explored new manifestations and applications of wisdom over the life course.

C. Multigenerational relationships

26. Countries, communities, and organizations are collaborating in new and unique ways in multigenerational initiatives that span information technology, cultural and art events, volunteer and educational programmes, aiming to create a new harmony of the generations in the context of changing societies.

1. National activities

27. With the aim to strengthen traditional intergenerational relationships, Venezuela is creating preventative measures to avert the erosion of traditional cultures; India launched partnership programmes between older persons, school children and youth; and Mongolia is encouraging older persons to share their life and work experiences with the younger generation.

28. Mauritius hosted, through the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity, and in collaboration with the Fédération internationale des associations de personnes agées (FIAPA) and the Lions Club, a conference with emphasis on intergenerational activities whereby participants agreed to improve collaboration on ageing in the Indian Ocean region. Intergenerational activities are a ubiquitous component of life in Ireland, where interaction and skills in computer technology, historical exploration, and the creative arts flow between the generations. Creative approaches to intergenerational initiatives as a way to promote positive images of older persons are plentiful among other countries, including Peru, Austria, Malta, Cameroon and the Philippines. In particular, Zimbabwe and Singapore focused on walk or dance marathons; Sweden publicized Attitudes Between Generations, a living theatre performance; and Portugal's emphasis on intergenerational activities ushered in a specially made poster and an intergenerational bicycle tour of the country as one of its publicity drives for "A society for all ages". El Salvador worked at promoting the participation and partnership between the young and the old, bringing recognition to older persons who have greatly contributed to society. Luxembourg reached out to youth to

participate in film, theatre and music exhibitions for the International Year.

29. In Canada, GenerationsCANConnect intends to build bridges between seniors and youth using information and communication technologies in various programme settings, including the involvement of Canadian youth interviewing seniors about significant memories and posting them on the Internet. New Zealand has been working with primary- and secondary-school principals in the development of a handbook to assist schools and other organizations in establishing and maintaining volunteer intergenerational programmes. The Netherlands hosted a Day of the Generations, where thousands of young and old came together to create a mosaic and celebrate, through games, projects and exhibits, the generations coming together. Denmark initiated one-week high school courses in which individuals of all ages discussed the role of older persons in different cultures and interaction between the generations. France included intergenerational solidarity, and Sweden, intergenerational relationships for a better future, as chosen themes for the International Year.

2. United Nations system

30. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) promoted multigenerational dialogue on development issues, through its Global Meeting of Generations in January 1999. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched *The State of World Population, 1998: The New Generations*. This comprehensive report examines how families and societies will meet the needs of an older population that is growing at an unprecedented rate at a time when more young people are entering their childbearing and working years. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) prepared a comprehensive background paper in its regional seminar on promoting "A society for all ages", entitled Promoting Multigenerational Relationships in Asia and the Pacific. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) distributed an interactive calendar specially made for 1999 as a way to inspire schools to carry out intergenerational dialogues and activities during the Year.

3. International non-governmental organizations

31. The CONGO Committee on Ageing/New York, together with the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, organized the Ninth International Day of Older Persons at United Nations Headquarters on 30 September 1999, around the theme "Across generations/across cultures".

32. Afro-Elder International is exploring how rapid changes in technology and demographics threaten to tear away the threads of culture and history, which are so important to intergenerational relationships. The Pan-African Foundation for Childhood and Third Age Protection (FETAG) works principally to form bridges between the generations by promoting traditional African values of intergenerational solidarity. They hope to open FETAG delegations in other African countries. The CONGO Committee on Ageing/Vienna launched the International Year on the International Day of Older Persons (1 October 1998), with the unique title, "Generations lending wings to each other — learning with each other, from each other, for each other".

33. The Association la Renaissance de St-Pierre in Martinique organized a regional, week-long event in celebration of the Year to promote multigenerational dialogue and explore regional initiatives. The Fédération internationale des associations de personnes agées (FIAPA) launched Adolescents of Yesterday and Today, an extensive survey that involved a team of one older and one younger person to discuss issues and determine the place of young and old in the next century. The results will be presented at a meeting in Paris in September 1999, which will also serve as a forum for generations to gather and exchange views. The International Council for Caring Communities (ICCC), together with UNCHS (Habitat) and the Open Society Institute New York, will convene "Caring communities for the twenty-first century: a cross-sectoral dialogue" in Budapest in September 1999. The conference will involve an intergenerational design competition from students in 12 countries of Eastern and Central Europe. The European Federation of the Elderly (EURAG) promoted multigenerational development through the conferences, the Importance of Voluntary Work and Self-Help for a Harmonious Co-Existence of Generations, in Germany, and Young & Old 2000: Towards A Society for All Ages, in Austria.

D. Population ageing and development

34. The interaction between population ageing and development is a complex fusion of global patterns in labour and capital markets, government pensions, services, and traditional support systems, which are further shaped by technological change and cultural transformations. The ageing of populations, no less equal in its worldwide impact, will increasingly influence decision-making at national and regional levels. From activities reported during the Year, it

is evident that there are a great many ways to integrate ageing policies and programmes into the broader development framework.

1. Global and multisectoral

35. The United Nations programme on ageing organized the Interregional Expert Consultation on Developing a Framework for Policies for A Society for All Ages in June 1999, hosted by the Republic of Korea and sponsored by the Swiss Re Life and Health. The overall purpose of the Consultation was to assist Governments in responding effectively to individual and population ageing by promoting and implementing the vision of "A society for all ages" (see annex).

36. The programme on ageing, together with the International Association of Gerontology (IAG), has been developing a Research Agenda on Ageing for the Twenty-first Century which will serve as a background for policy response to population and individual ageing in both developing and developed countries. An expert consultation launched this event in Austria in February 1999, with the support of the Novartis Foundation for Gerontology. A follow-up meeting is planned for November 1999, which will be supported by Germany.

37. The Trust Fund for Ageing continues as an important developmental tool of the programme on ageing. Most recently, the Trust Fund has received support from the Governments of Germany and the United Kingdom, and from the private sector: AARP, the Swiss Re Life and Health, and the Novartis Foundation for Gerontology. The Fund provides seed money aiming for catalytic effects, such as that reported by the Associates for International Management Services in a recent review of an innovative programme, entitled Intergenerational Pre-school Education and Development. The Management Service found that the project, implemented by the SSM Foundation of the Dominican Republic, had been so successful that it should be considered for replication in other countries, particularly during the International Year of Older Persons.

38. The Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat issued "Population ageing, 1999", which provides the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on population ageing at the global, regional, and national levels. The World Bank, actively involved in lending activities related to pension reform, has studied the effects of ageing on demographics: how ageing affects mobility, migration, food availability and life expectancy; and how ageing affects health-care costs. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) prepared a document for the Year that examined the interrelations between the ageing of rural populations, agricultural production and food security. Special focus was given to Asia and Latin America, where fertility has declined and rural and urban migration is significant. The World Health Organization (WHO) has conducted research and developed global strategies to help countries formulate policies to address the public health impact of rapidly ageing populations.

39. The International Institute on Ageing (INIA) convened a training conference, Changing Population Age Structure and Implications for Development: National Policy Formulation and Policy Development in the Least Developed Countries of South East Asia, in Thailand in January 1999. INIA will also sponsor a seminar in Malta for Israeli and Chinese policy makers on the political implications of a society for all ages, in November 1999. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recently published a comprehensive report on population ageing and development, entitled "Coping with population ageing in Australia".[3] The International Social Security Association (ISSA) will hold a conference, Demographic Trends and Globalization: Challenges for Social Security, in the Slovak Republic in October 1999.

2. National and regional activities

40. The Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is convening a commemorative meeting on the Year to discuss the demographic transition and its social and economic implications, in Santiago, Chile, in September 1999. ESCAP adopted the Macau Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific at its regional meeting in Bangkok in April 1998, and subsequently prepared a background document, "Population ageing and development: implications for Asia and the Pacific" for its regional seminar in Bangkok in December 1998. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with a regional agenda with regard to population ageing and regional training programmes, and co-sponsored, with the Inter-American Development Bank, a seminar on ageing and development in Latin America in December 1998.

41. The European Commission adopted the Communication on Ageing, which offers an analysis of the implications and consequences of the ageing of society and proposes strategies for appropriate policy responses. Building on the Communication, the EC has initiated discussions on a European older persons' platform, which

would serve to strengthen the voice of older persons at the European Union level and establish a representative body with whom the Commission could enter into discussion on ageing and development issues. In Central and Eastern Europe, a three-year training and development project, organized by Case Western Reserve University and funded by the Open Society Institute, worked towards strengthening civil society and services. The training encompassed internships in community administration and planning, which was provided by various members of the Cleveland Federation for Community Planning. Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, recently published "Regional population ageing of the EU at different speeds up to 2025", which examines the demographic outlook for the European Union and how the pension and health systems will respond to the dramatic ageing of the continent's population.

42. Within the European region, the United Kingdom is building upon its March 1998 Millennium Debate of the Age, through Age Concern England, which is targeting up to 30 million people for their views on life in the twenty-first century. Set up to discuss current thinking on ageing and options for the future, the Debate is the largest independent public consultation initiative ever undertaken in the United Kingdom.

E. Women and ageing

43. Women are outliving men and comprise the majority of older persons in nearly every part of the world. This is most evident in the upper years, where women outnumber men by approximately 2:1 among those aged 80 and over (65:35 per cent, respectively). The life path of women everywhere is often imbued with conflicted priorities and exigencies. This can lead in later life to wisdom, but the majority of older women are also paired with fewer resources and opportunities, creating obstacles to their full participation in the socio-economic, cultural and political life of their countries. Two recurrent phenomena further affect how older women are viewed and treated: policies generally address them as "vulnerable", overlooking structural inequalities; and representative images of older persons tend to omit them. Activities during the Year, however, reveal a greater awareness of the potential and contributions of older women.

1. National activities

44. New Zealand has earmarked funds for researching and celebrating the lives of older female achievers. Equatorial Guinea is examining the role of older women in development vis-à-vis poverty eradication. Mongolia is working to remove obstacles to women's participation in political, economic and social spheres and to enhance the political and economic power of women, with priority given to assisting rural women. In Israel, the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center is focused on addressing the particular concerns of older women for the Year. The Netherlands has placed emphasis on organizing projects for women over 50 years of age, and Belgium organized a seminar on older women, in conjunction with the Belgian Dutch-speaking Women's Council and the Higher Institute for Family Science, in February 1999. In the Republic of Korea, the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs is supporting the active participation of older women and addressing their care and income security needs — issues that were explored at a broad-based conference, co-hosted by a Republic of Korea enterprise and UNDP in June, on "The challenges for older women in the twenty-first century: gender issues of eldercare".

45. Singapore hosted the conference, Women's Health: The Nation's Gain, in July 1999, which paid particular attention to older women in Asia. The conference was supported in part by the Tsao Foundation and UNIFEM. The United States launched "Take time to care", a grass-roots initiative to raise awareness among older women about taking medications safely.

2. United Nations system

46. Older women's active role in development was taken up by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session, based on a report entitled "Gender and ageing: problems, perceptions and politics". Among other things, the report, prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, discussed key global issues regarding the differential impact of population ageing on men and women. At its forty-second session and in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Commission reviewed the report and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Caregiving and Older Persons: Gender Dimensions, held in Malta in late 1997. The Commission ultimately adopted resolution 42/4, on older women and support systems: gender and caregiving.

47. The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) focused particular attention on the role of older women in supporting households and in families where the principal woman migrates. Its December 1998 issue of *INSTRAW News* featured articles related to women's life

cycle. The FAO Women in Development Service published a study, "Participatory rural appraisal and socio-economic and gender analysis", focusing on the growing phenomenon of the feminization of agriculture, particularly with regard to older women.

3. International non-governmental organizations

48. The Pan-African Foundation for Childhood and Third Age Protection (FETAG) promotes competitions that advance research in a variety of areas, including the situation of older widows in polygamous families and the relationship between a woman's age and her status in society. The Older Women's Network will convene a conference on "Older women and social exclusion: issues, empowerment, action", in the Netherlands in October 1999. Global Action on Aging convened a preparatory event in Tennessee, United States, in August 1998 which examined and ultimately adopted the Nashville Declaration on Older Women's Human Rights. AARP International Activities will convene, together with the Netherlands Platform Older People and Europe (NPOE) and the United Nations programme on ageing, an international symposium on "The impact of globalization on images of older women", in New York in October 1999, which will lay the foundations for global research into this critical issue as it explores stereotypes of older women and how they affect status and opportunities.

III. Legacies of 1999: first indications

49. While it is premature to assess the Year's worldwide impact, its impact on the United Nations programme on ageing is already evident. First, the programme has extended its exploration of the roles, opportunities, entitlements and contributions of older persons in fast-changing societies. With other partners, it is endeavouring to identify late life's unique capacities and contributions, such as new manifestations of wisdom in a technological-oriented world, and the competitive advantage of older persons in the new kinds of service-oriented economies. This search is being guided by the expectation that demographic ageing holds the promise of maturing attitudes and capabilities in social, economic, cultural and spiritual undertakings, and for global peace and development in the next century.

50. Secondly, the programme is engaged in the ongoing formulation of a policy framework for a society for all ages, together with a research engine that could drive it. The still evolving policy framework grew out of the conceptual framework for the Year, encompassing the situation of older persons, lifelong individual development, multigenerational relationships in families and communities, and the macrosocietal implications of ageing.[4] These four facets were subsequently examined as two dynamic processes: investing in the phases of life; and fostering enabling environments.[5] A focus on these dynamics-making lifelong investments and society-wide adjustments has given rise to a proactive and positive exploration of ageing for its potential contributions to development.

51. Following on the Year's rich debate and its many worldwide activities and innovations, the programme on ageing anticipates four broad areas of activity in the years ahead:

(a) Priority programmatic measures: continuing refinement of the policy framework for a society for all ages, an undertaking supported by the Republic of Korea and by Swiss Re Life and Health; further elaboration of the research agenda on ageing for the twenty-first century undertaken in cooperation with the International Association of Gerontology, supported by the Government of Germany and Novartis Foundation for Gerontology; and development of an Internet accessible database of policy approaches and innovative projects, supported by the Government of the Netherlands;

(b) Meetings: two are planned for 2000, with the leadership or close collaboration of the United Nations programme on ageing — an expert examination of the interaction of social technologies and multigenerational ties (supported by the Government of the United Kingdom and being organized by HelpAge International); and an international conference on rural ageing (being organized by the University of West Virginia). Three other meetings are being considered for 2000 — a conference of national focal points (at the initiative of the Government of Malta); an expert group on midlife adjustments for resourceful ageing (seeking the involvement of the media and research communities); and resourceful ageing and the workplace (with the corporate sector);

(c) Reviews: four are scheduled for the years 2001 and 2002 and could be combined. In 2001, three interrelated reviews will consider the impact of the Year; ongoing implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing; and, relatedly, assessment of success in reaching the "targets on ageing" elaborated in 1992. In 2002, a review of the outcome of the World Assembly on Ageing may be undertaken in response to resolution 37/2 of the Commission for Social Development in which the Commission requested the Secretary-General "to solicit the views of States, non-governmental organizations and the private sector on updating the International Plan of Action on Ageing and on

the desirability and feasibility of convening in the year 2002 a review of the outcome of the World Assembly on Ageing, including the interrelationship of ageing and development".[6] The views have been requested and will be reported to the Commission at its thirty-eighth session, in 2000;

(d) Mainstreaming: For the most part, during the United Nations conferences of the 1990s, the issue of ageing was "added on", usually in terms of the needs of "vulnerable elderly". Ageing has not been seen in its "revolutionary" terms — how the addition of decades to life can effect a restructuring of the entire lifecourse — or in global terms — how the rising proportion of older persons may invite a restructuring of the socio-economic and cultural landscape.

52. From the 1999 debate and its innumerable activities, a two-part change of mind may be under way. On the one hand, there is much greater recognition of the far-reaching implications of demographic change. On the other, there is a shift from a widespread negative view of older persons as "patients and pensioners" and of societal ageing as a "problem" to a positive view, captured by a member of the Indian Parliament speaking to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session on the occasion of the launch of the Year. She said:

> "... we see age not as harbinger of mortality, but opportunity to rekindle life's fires in ways different from that in which it was lived, ways different and exciting, but rooted, inevitably, in the experiences and education of years before.
>
> "We see age not as evidence of biological frailty or cerebral limitation, but as integral to the adventure of life, a phase to be looked forward to, savoured and cherished.
>
> "We see age not in the context of individuals, or societies, or nations, but in a global picture where the needs of those fortunate to take it for granted can be harmonized with the need of those for whom adulthood itself is not assured.
>
> "We see age not as a reward or a liability but simply a part of the exultation of the 'larger freedom' to which the United Nations Charter pledges the peoples in whose name this Organization was established and from whom they continue to have so large a measure of expectation."

Notes

[1] See *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July-6 August 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI, para. 40.

[2] Ibid., para. 25 (I).

[3] Economics Department Working Paper No. 217.

[4] See A/50/114.

[5] See A/53/294.

[6] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No.6* (E/1999/26).

Annex

Highlights of an expert consultation on developing a policy framework for a society for all ages

1. This annex outlines a possible new "architecture of ageing", combining strategic thinking with pragmatic measures. It aims to be preventative, holistic, interactive, sustainable and even wealth-creating. It is suggestive, not prescriptive. And it represents the latest stage in a continuing process intended to facilitate movement towards "A society for all ages", the theme of the International Year of Older Persons, 1999. It was elaborated throughout the Year, most notably at a United Nations interregional expert consultation in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 11 to 16 June 1999, hosted by the Government of the Republic and supported by Swiss Re Life and Health.

Evolution

2. Policy responses to ageing until now have tended to focus on provision of care and income security for older persons, which remain important but inadequate to the scale and rate of ageing now occurring and projected to intensify in coming decades. The World Bank report "Averting the old age crisis" and other commentaries have attested to the unsustainability of many conventional policies in developed, developing and transitional economies.

3. Governments have recently begun to expand their approaches to individual ageing, complementing care and security measures for older persons with ones promoting active ageing. For example, in 1997 at its Denver summit, the Group of 8 [industrial countries] recognized the need to abandon stereotypes of older persons as dependent. They discussed how to promote active ageing including, with due regard to older persons' choices and circumstances, the removal of disincentives to labour force participation and lowering of barriers to flexible and part-time work.

4. Active or resourceful ageing requires an enabling environment, principally: opportunities over the entire lifecourse for building up capabilities, or "capital", and adjustment of family, community and country environments in keeping with the new demographic trends, such as the inversion of the family pyramid already evident in China and other countries and the astonishing, continuing rise in the proportion of older persons throughout the world, from one in 10 today to one in five by 2050, one in four by 2100 and one in three by 2150. (Several developed economies will reach the latter proportion within the next 30 years.)

5. Thus, adjustments must be made by individuals, families, communities and countries — at the micro, meso and macro levels of societies. These adjustments are rendered more complex, and potentially more fruitful, by the convergence of the demographic transition with a development transition, the latter holding promise of new economic as well as socio-cultural enrichment.

6. The build-up of human, social, economic and environmental capital is important in all countries. The age-advanced and economically developed countries need a contributing younger old population as their oldest old rise in numbers and the working-age population declines. The developing economies — where 60 per cent of the world's elderly now live, rising to 70 per cent in 20 years — are challenged to develop human and economic capital while strengthening the social capital of family and community security systems. Economies in transition, which lack both the economic capital of developed and the social capital of developing countries, need to devise creative uses of their human capital to address the immediate emergency needs of an age-advanced population.

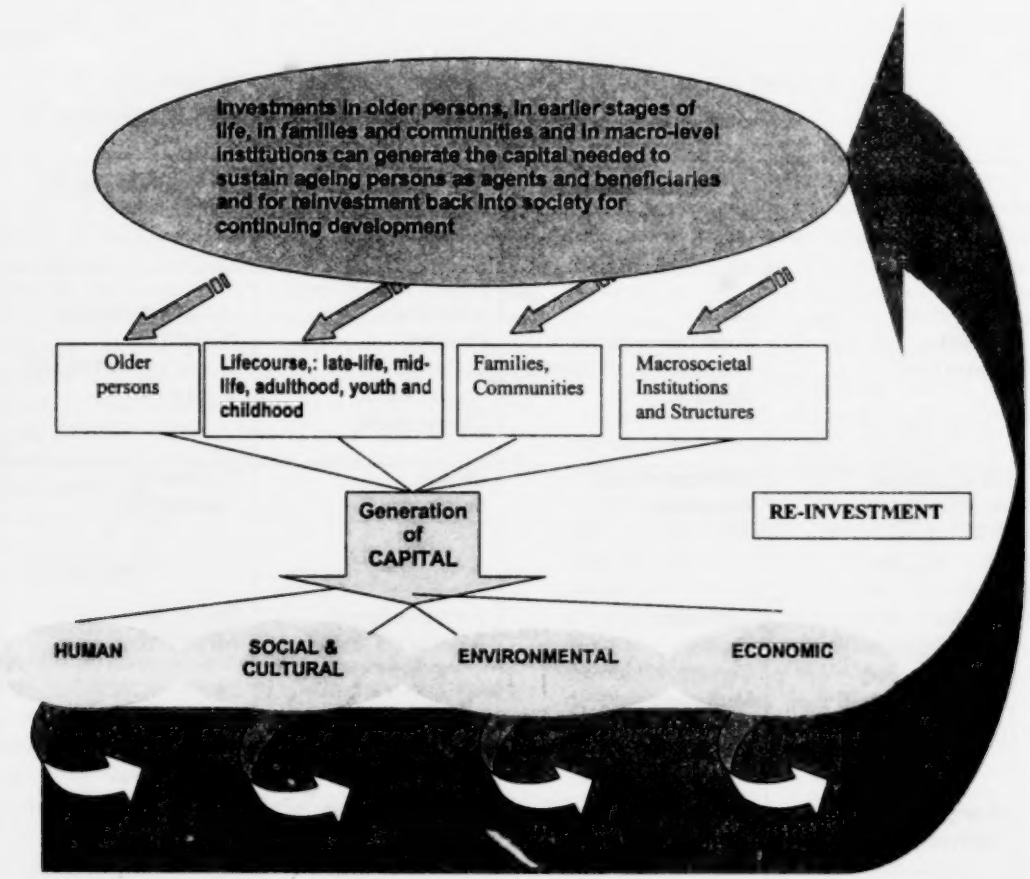
Strategic approach

7. The four fundamental elements of the framework for a society for all ages are: efforts by older persons themselves; capabilities, or "capital", accumulated over the lifecourse; mutually enriching multigenerational relationships in families and communities; and adjustment of national infrastructures in line with demographic and other changes. These were first outlined in the conceptual framework for the Year.[a]

8. The four elements can be rendered dynamic by blending them with the idea of generating capital in four areas — human, socio-cultural, economic and environmental — in order to produce a proactive and wealth-creating approach to ageing, going beyond a mere reactive, or maintenance, stance. The following matrix illustrates the idea of capital-generation. It lists some primary investors for each type of capital, their assets, some operating principles, and some possible outcomes.

9. The following diagram illustrates the flow between the four elements and the four kinds of capital.

Capital	Human	Social-cultural	Economic	Environmental
Primary investors	Individuals Families Schools etc.	Families Local communities Communities of interest Media etc.	Individuals Families Communities Private sector Governments	Local Government Planners Developers (urban and rural) etc.
Principles	Independence Resilience	Interdependence Reciprocity	Growth Sustenance	Enablement Connectivity
Assets	Health Knowledge, skills Understanding Capabilities, will	Networks Trust Communication Mutual supports	Formal/informal Work skills, assets, security systems etc.	Barrier-free All-age compatible
Capital outcomes	**Long-lived individuals who are:** Skilled Resilient Reflective Adapted Flourishing throughout life	**Societies that are:** Caring, supportive Tolerant, pluralist Integrated Learning and capable of blending innovation and tradition in appropriate balance	**An economy that is:** Secure Open Equitable Responsive Competitive Adapted to an ageing Society	**An environment that is:** Livable Flexible Accessible Adaptable Age-integrated


Investments in older persons, in earlier stages of life, in families and communities and in macro-level institutions can generate the capital needed to sustain ageing persons as agents and beneficiaries and for reinvestment back into society for continuing development
Older persons
Lifecourse,: late-life, mid-life, adulthood, youth and childhood
Families, Communities
Macrosocietal Institutions and Structures
Generation of CAPITAL
RE-INVESTMENT
HUMAN
SOCIAL & CULTURAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
ECONOMIC

Measures

10. The strategic approach requires pragmatic measures which creatively take advantage of national resources, aspirations and the capabilities of actors, including the governmental, non-governmental and for-profit sectors. Measures for consideration include:

(a) Lifelong education — leading to a skilled population, enlightened elders and a learning society;

(b) Promotion of healthy lifestyles — resulting in delay or defeat of disease;

(c) Multigenerational community development initiatives, including microenterprises and microcredit — generating all four types of capital in order to strengthen communities;

(d) Flexible labour policies, including phased retirement, better integration of women into the workforce and men into the lives of families — allowing for more gender equity, intergenerational care and opportunities for resourceful ageing;

(e) A barrier-free and age-integrated built environment supporting all-age access and multigenerational encounters — which would foster better intergenerational dialogue;

(f) Investment in civil society, including intergenerational organizations and organizations of older persons — for the enrichment of civil society;

(g) Creative approaches to ensuring material well-being and the provision of appropriate social services and welfare coverage — for sustainable national welfare policies;

(h) Income security measures that generate national capital through savings and pension schemes and that foster human solidarity, as in the case of savings cooperatives and informal community solidarity systems — towards poverty elimination.

Questions

11. Some of the questions on devising a policy for a society for all ages might be:

(a) Is the policy sustainable in the light of anticipated demographic and societal change?

(b) Is the policy able to contribute to the development of any or all of the four types of capital and the essential balance between them?

(c) Does the policy enable accumulation of capital across the lifecourse?

(d) Does the policy enhance the continuing evolution of gender equity in family caring and nurturing?

(e) Does the policy enhance individual choice and autonomy and, simultaneously, community solidarity?

(f) Does the policy promote the interdependence of generations?

Conclusion

12. In light of rapid population ageing and the projected demographic shifts extending into the coming century, action is necessary in the short, medium and long term. Such action will vary according to a country's rate and extent of ageing and its socio-economic development.

13. Governments are faced with the responsibility, in partnership with others, of ensuring the well-being and health of all citizens. This responsibility transcends any considerations of gender, social class, or age group, ethnicity or any other individual or group characteristic.

14. Many of the conventional approaches to ageing in different societies have tended to remain intact in spite of extraordinary changes in demography, individual life expectancy, family structure, technology, economy and culture.

15. Fresh, imaginative and more positive responses to the prospects of further increases in life expectancy and the ageing of populations need to be instituted. To be effective, such approaches need to be based on fundamental shifts in orientation. It is necessary to move from an emphasis on reacting to the negative characteristics of older persons to seeing also their contributions and from responding to ageing as a problem to seeing it as a potential for wealth creation and a catalyst of flourishing lives.

16. Each society, according to its own priorities and resources, must follow its own course towards the realization of a society for all ages and determine the first crucial steps to be taken in that direction at this time. There is no question but that now is the time to begin the process in all societies.

Notes

[a] See A/50/114.